

# COVID-19: Systemic autoimmune diseases\* and vaccines

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I have a systemic autoimmune disease: do I need to get vaccinated?

1. **Yes**, anti-COVID19 vaccines and in particular mRNA vaccines, are recommended to all people suffering from systemic autoimmune diseases. The risks associated with COVID-19 are far greater than the potential ones associated with vaccines: the billions of doses administered and ongoing studies show that **vaccines are safe and effective**.

2

Do I have to stop my immunosuppressive therapy in order to get vaccinated?

2. **Not necessarily**. However, some drugs could reduce the effectiveness of the vaccine: **only your trusted specialist can evaluate** (in case of stable and well-controlled disease and on the basis of the potential risks and benefits) **an eventual temporary suspension** of your immunosuppressive therapy in the weeks following the vaccination.

3

Do I have to stop taking steroids in order to get vaccinated?

3. Daily doses of steroids above 8-10 mg may reduce the effectiveness of the vaccination. For this reason, to ensure an adequate vaccination response, in accordance with the recommendations of the European scientific societies, **the daily dose of steroids** taken by the patient **should be reduced** to the minimum effective one, **as long as the disease is stable and well controlled**. Any changes in your therapy should be discussed with your trusted specialist.

4. **Yes**, the Ministry of Health and the Medicines Agencies in Europe believe that a booster is appropriate for all patients suffering from systemic autoimmune diseases, to ensure a better vaccination coverage. **The booster can be administered 4 months after your last dose**.

4

Should I receive the third dose of the vaccine? If so, how long after the second dose?

5

Who should receive a fourth dose?

5. In general, **patients under immunosuppressive therapy, are eligible and strongly encouraged to get a fourth dose**. Intervals depend on the type of vaccine received previously. Since there can be exceptions, please consult your specialist for your specific recommendations.



European  
Reference  
Network

for rare or low prevalence  
complex diseases

Network  
Connective Tissue  
and Musculoskeletal  
Diseases (ERN ReCONNET)

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Do I need to get blood tests done to measure anti-COVID antibodies before vaccinating or taking the third dose?

6. **It is not necessary**: the level of antibodies developed against COVID-19 does not tell us if and how much you are protected from the infection. **The third dose of vaccine** for patients suffering from autoimmune diseases **is recommended regardless of the antibody level**.

**Protect yourself: wear an FFP2 mask indoors, ventilate closed spaces frequently, keep the recommended distances from other people, etc.**

\*Antiphospholipid Syndrome, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, Idiopathic Inflammatory Myopathies, IgG4-related disease, Mixed Connective Tissue Disease, Relapsing Polychondritis, Sjögren's Syndrome, Systemic Lupus Erythematosus, Systemic Sclerosis, Undifferentiated Connective Tissue Disease